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Aspin Says CIA Foretold Massive Influx of Cubans

By Margot Hornblower
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Central Intelligence Agency predicted that Cuban President Fidel Castro might allow massive emigration three months before he did so, but the Carter administration ignored the warning, a Wisconsin congressman charged today.

In a statement, Democrat Les Aspin, chairman of the oversight subcommittee of the House Intelligence Committee, accuses the administration of converting "a great intelligence success into a great national disaster."

"In the past, there have been instances of intelligence failures leading to bad U.S. policy," he said. "In this case, we have had an intelligence success that nevertheless seems to have made little impact on the consequent behavior of our government."

If the administration had believed the CIA, it could have "done a better job of holding back the floodgates" and, Aspin said, "we could have made good propaganda out of these people leaving."

Instead, according to Aspin, "We have been treated to the spectacle of a floundering administration declaring first a closed-door policy and then an open-door policy and then a closed-door policy again."

Aspin's charges were based on a May 21 closed-door hearing at which a member of the State Department's Cuba desk and an official from the CIA's Cuba Analytic Center testified. A subcommittee aide would not release the names of the witnesses.

State Department official Joanna Caplan said she would have "no comment" on the charges until department officials have a chance to review Aspin's report.

The six-page report issued by the subcommittee—entitled "The Cuban Emigres: Was There a U.S. Intelligence Failure?"—states that:

- On Jan. 30, the CIA's Cuba Analytic Center reported to the State Department that "the Castro regime may again resort to large-scale emigration to reduce discontent caused by Cuba's deteriorating economic condition."

- On Feb. 21, the State Department

learned that discussions about reopening Camarioca, a port opened to unrestricted emigration in 1965, were taking place and that Cuba wanted the United States to let in more Cubans.

- On March 8, Castro alluded to the possibility of a new Camarioca in a speech. If the United States would not discourage illegal boat hijackings to Florida, "we might also have to take our own measures," Castro warned.

- A State Department official testified that at the time of the Castro speech the department believed "that the reopening of Camarioca did not seem imminent."

Aspin said Cuban officials were also frustrated that the United States was not processing faster the political prisoners who were being allowed to emigrate—a situation which eventually led to the storming of the U.S. interest section in Havana April 15.

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